

Former Instructor Linked To Fatal Jumps At Lodi Parachute Center Faces Federal Charges

June 23, 2021 / 4:47 PM PDT / CBS Sacramento

LODI (CBS13) – The owner of the troubled Lodi parachute center is speaking out over the arrest of one of his workers who has been linked to fatal jumps. The former instructor is facing federal charges.

Bill Dause says he's known Robert Pooley, 46, the skydiving instructor at the center of the federal probe, for a decade. He's even jumped with him.

"He's a very good instructor," Dause said.

Pooley faces four charges of wire fraud and two counts of aggravated identity theft.

According to court documents in 2010, Pooley obtained ratings as a "Tandem Examiner" with the U.S. Parachute Association (USPA) and another business that makes tandem parachute systems. He then began conducting training courses. Five years later, the USPA and the business suspended Pooley's examiner ratings, but he continued to teach – hiding suspensions and charging thousands.

"Well, I have problems with what has transpired. But at the time, everything was according to regulation to my knowledge," Dause said.

One of the instructors he reportedly gave lessons to was killed in a tandem jump with a teenager in 2016. For 18-year-old Tyler Turner, his mother spoke with CBS Sacramento.

"Due to my sons' death, it uncovered the forging of documents and the reason why my son's instructor was not properly trained in what to do. He could have been saved. They could have made it had he been trained properly," she said.

Dause says he offers the facility and the airplane ride. Instructors are, in essence, independent contractors. He says the Federal Aviation Administration monitors them and the equipment used there.

Turner's mother says this federal indictment is just the beginning.

"My heart goes out to every single family who lost someone due to this negligence," she said.
"We're fighting for everyone, not just my son. We're fighting for everyone this has happened to."

We reached out to Pooley's attorney, but have not heard back. If convicted, Pooley faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and up to \$1 million in fines.

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